

OCASI 2012 Professional Development Conference
June 13-15, 2012
Westin Prince Hotel, Toronto, Ontario

Conference Summary Report and Evaluation

1. Introduction

The OCASI 2012 Professional Development (PD) Conference took place on June 13-15, 2012 at the Westin Prince Hotel, Toronto, Ontario. For the first time this annual Professional Development Conference was aimed to managers, coordinators and supervisors of settlement service organizations across the province of Ontario. OCASI is pleased with the response and great interest from its member agencies and other organizations funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Sector interest in participating at the Conference exceeded the limitations of the budget and the venue.

2. Objectives

The objectives of this OCASI's Professional Development Conference are:

- To enhance the professional competency and skills level for managers, supervisors and coordinators.
- To facilitate the networking and sharing of information, innovative approaches and expertise among new and experienced workers
- Identify and prepare for emerging trends in the settlement service field
- To offer a forum for discussion and consensus building on issues related to the development, professionalization and accountability of the settlement sector.

3. Summary of Conference Program

The Conference program followed sectoral response to a needs assessment survey, recommendations from the Professional Development Conference Advisory Committee and other sectoral input and consisted of the following:

- Greetings from Josie Di Zio, OCASI President and from Lucille LeBlanc, Director General, Ontario Region, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)
- Opening Plenary Presentation with panelists Veronica Barnes, Regional Director, Settlement, Intergovernmental Affairs and Multiculturalism, Ontario Region, CIC and Suzanne Gordon, Manager, Labour Market Integration Unit, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI)
- Panel Presentation with sectoral representatives: *Leading the Wave: Setting Trends in Immigrant Settlement and Integration*. Panelists included Mario J. Calla, Executive Director, COSTI, Kay Blair, Executive Director, Community Microskills Development Centre and Lucia Harrison, Executive Director, Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre
- 40 workshops (including those repeated twice), 6 drop-in sessions and an orientation session about OCASI for new workers
- An Exhibitors' Lounge and Resources Display tables
- Networking opportunities, entertainment, and social/recreational activities.

Two workshops were presented in French and four workshops were presented in English and French (simultaneous interpretation). Other sessions with simultaneous interpretation included the plenaries.

A total of 49 facilitators and trainers were engaged in the delivery of professional development and information sessions. Trainers were independent consultants, representatives from immigrant settlement organizations, other relevant non-profit organizations as well as government.

For a complete program please visit **www.ocasi.org/conference** and look for *Download 2012 Program Package*. A tag at the top of the main Conference page will allow access to the Program in the French language.

4. Participants' Profile

The Conference was attended by 354 participants from 131 agencies from across the province. This number includes 37 participants from French-speaking service providers, 49 facilitators and speakers, 9 representatives from government -including funders such as CIC and MCI representatives as well as others that attended as participants and booth attendants and 322 participants from immigrant-service providers from OCASI member agencies and other CIC-funded agencies, including some participants that were also presenters. Of the 131 participating agencies, 110 are receiving funding from by CIC.

As per information from evaluation forms 40 % of participants attended the PD Conference for the first time and 60 % attended one or more times before.

It came to our attention that a significant number of participants attended the OCASI Professional Development Conference several years ago as front-line workers and now are managers, coordinators or supervisors.

5. General Evaluation

Participants completed a Conference Evaluation Form at the end of the Conference. The Evaluation Form was also accessible online. All participants received an email with the link for the Online Evaluation form. Several participants completed this form online after the Conference.

Participants also completed an Evaluation Form for each workshop and information session. See Appendix # 1 for a summary of these evaluations.

The following is a summary of the information collected from the PD Conference Evaluation Forms. To obtain a copy of the complete compilation of evaluations please contact Paulina Maciulis at pmaciulis@ocasi.org.

5.1 Overall Conference rating

Among other questions, participants were asked to rate the quality of the activities. See below for the results:

Answer Options	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement	N/A
How do you rate the conference?	67.9%	30.9%	1.2%	0.0%
Pre-conference communication	78.0%	22.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Online registration	73.5%	25.3%	1.2%	0.0%
Schedule of events	60.8%	36.7%	2.5%	0.0%
Conference program and resources	61.4%	34.9%	3.6%	0.0%
Hotel facilities	72.0%	22.0%	0.0%	6.1%
Meals & snacks	62.7%	30.1%	7.2%	0.0%
Opening Plenary(June 13)	59.8%	26.8%	6.1%	7.3%
"Meet & Mingle" Reception (June 13)	25.3%	22.8%	6.3%	45.6%
Panel Presentation (June 14)	56.8%	30.9%	2.5%	9.9%
Playback Theatre (June14)	21.3%	20.0%	13.8%	45.0%
DJ and Dance (June14)	18.4%	11.8%	3.9%	65.8%

5.2 Workshops and Information Sessions

Most of the participants indicated that the resources and information provided in the workshops were relevant, useful and current and will definitely enhance their ability to manage services at their agency and feel more confident in fulfilling their work responsibilities.

In general, participants highlighted the great choices and relevance of workshops for managers, the learning experience that the PD Conference offered them and the high quality of presenters who were very knowledgeable and good facilitators. They also mentioned that the OCASI Conferences leaves them energized and inspired.

Many participants indicated that the sessions helped them to be aware and understand the changes in the sector and highlighted the importance to continue meeting in order to keep up with the trends in funding and policies.

*J'ai exploré de nouveaux horizons et des nouvelles réalités qui pourront m'aider dans mon travail.
Beaucoup de ressource et de moment de réflexion enrichissants
I am currently working on the outcomes based evaluation side of things and received some very helpful information around this topic.*

Sarah Delicate, Gillian Kerr, Janis Galway, Yolande Charles, Deborah G. Headley, Dolores Montavez Ruz and Faed Hendry were some of the best rated facilitators. For more detailed information regarding workshops evaluation see Appendix # 1.

Recommendations

A few participants indicated that some sessions were very basic and recommended more in depth content. The inclusion of practical tools and more case studies was also a recommendation from several workshops. Some recommended that presenters that are not from the sector be made mindful of the characteristics of the sector so their presentations are more relevant to the audience.

Participants highlighted the quality and sectoral importance of the following workshops and topics and recommended to repeat them at future conferences so other participants can attend:

- Outcome Based Measurement from Theory to Implementation; Measuring Settlement Outcomes Tied to CIC's Logic Model and Are you Competing or Just Complying?
- Positive Dialogue Skills for Managers: Going below the Surface; Giving Feedback: The Skill to Master Difficult Conversations
- Marketing and Outreach to Newcomers and the Community
- Professional and Ethical Practice: Boundaries; Bringing Ethics to Life and Liability Issues in the Settlement Service Sector: great interrelated sessions
- Becoming an Effective Supervisor
- The Challenge of Change: from Coping to Thriving and Managing Change in Settlement Services
- Managing Sound In-House Evaluations and Three Things Settlement Agencies Can't Do Without: Quality Assurance; Program Evaluation and Performance Management:

Several participants recommended including sessions on changes in immigration regulations as well as the need to deal with eligibility to services for refugees, non-status immigrants, temporary foreign workers and students. Other areas for further professional development included:

- Updated information on the modernization approach
- Advocacy approach plus examples of highly effective networks
- Presenters from CIC/MCI: updates on immigration policies, future program planning, priorities, expectations
- Information about grants and funding sources
- Stress management, self-care, working in non-profit and have work/life balance, stress and how to deal with it

- More about communication, dialogues, cultural bumps, conflict readiness and how to help clients, deal with overall stress in these times of social unrest and economical and political changes
- Program evaluation
- Leadership building. Managing diversity. Effective HR practises. Anti-oppression strategies. Leading a multicultural and multilingual team
- Examples of innovation related to immigrant-serving agencies, whether it's from within Ontario or other places
- Proposals writing. Program budgeting and project management techniques

Beaucoup plus d'ateliers niveaux avancés car le colloque est destinée à des managers, coordinateurs et superviseurs qui sont déjà au courant de bien de choses.

I would like to see a session on how settlement works are trained in their agencies. What does their training and orientation program look like?

Program evaluation of settlement services should be a must

5.3 Panel Presentations

Many participants highlighted the panel presentations as the best part of the Conference, being them very informative. While some indicated that the Opening Plenary offered opportunities for agencies to ask relevant questions to CIC and MCI representatives, other asked for more time allotted to questions and answers.

In general, most participants welcomed the panel presentation from funders, the question period and the insight of future changes in immigration and CIC policy it addressed. They also highlighted the importance of hearing and discussing trends in the sector with sectoral representatives.

Recommendations

Participants recommended continuing providing discussion panels on current trends and issues.

La séance Attraction et rétention des immigrants francophones en Ontario : Un avantage stratégique et économique paraît être une plénière

Un débat sur une nouvelle vision à avoir suite aux changements de politique de CIC.

Accordez assez de temps aux séances plénières.

5.4 Networking

Many participants included networking as one of the best features of the Conference. They indicated that networking opportunities allowed them to meet with new colleagues, share with others in their region, learn strategies, compare information, share ideas and discuss emerging issues, concerns, challenges and successes.

5.5 Logistics (Conference scheduling, administration, venue)

Participants praised the choice of venue for the Conference, individual accommodation, the “wonderful” hotel staff, the provision of halal food, the onsite registration process and the continuous assistance available from OCASI staff and volunteers. They commended all the aspects of the pre-Conference communications, the online registration system and the support provided by OCASI staff. Most of participants indicated that it was a very well-organized conference.

Recommendations

Some participants indicated that they would have liked more workshops for shorter period of time to have the opportunity to attend more sessions, while others wanted longer sessions. There were requests to allocate longer time to plenaries to have more opportunities for questions and answers.

Le temps accordé n'était suffisant pour présentation du plénière.

The opening plenary was good, but not enough time to ask questions. It was more like an information session, not a plenary.

Other recommendations include providing free internet access in individual rooms and better entertainment not work-related,

Some participants indicated that they would welcome more variety of food, especially for vegetarians as well as more choices for snacks and drinks at breaks. The issue of even availability of enough food was identified and addressed during the Conference.

Several participants from the Toronto area recommended that accommodation be provided for Toronto participants, so they would be able to engage in networking and entertainment events in the evening

While some participants recommended more break time to relax and network between sessions, other indicated that there was too much "free time".

A few participants commented that facing funds shortage, we could limit food offer to breakfasts and provide limited reimbursement for lunch and/or dinner. Others suggested that the Conference could be shortened to 2 days instead of 3.

6. Outcomes

The Conference was able to reach the target population. As per information from evaluation forms, 41% of the participants were managers, 28 % were program coordinators, 4% supervisors and 27% held other positions at their agencies such as Executive Director, Assistant Manager and Settlement Counsellor. Of the 131 participating agencies, 110 are receiving funding from by CIC.

The high number of francophone participants –the highest ever for OCASI Conferences- was an important outcome and a result of targeted outreach.

Most of the participants indicated that the Conference enhanced their professional competency and skills and knowledge. They praised the variety and choice of workshops as well as the knowledge and high level of expertise of the presenters. They highlighted that they learnt new skills, techniques and useful strategies to implement at their agencies.

Participants also highlight that the Conference offered great opportunities for networking and sharing of information, innovative approaches and expertise as well as to meet with colleagues from their region and enhance supportive regional networks.

Many participants concurred that this was the best conference in terms of quality of workshops and other activities and praised the overall organizations of the event.

7. Participants' comments

The following remarks summarize participants' additional positive observations:

- The best conference I attended in a long time. You nailed it, a very interesting and productive 3 days. A good investment for all the players.

- I was really proud of OCASI in undertaking this kind of leadership role in helping building more effective management practice within the Settlement Sector. As we grow and adapt in this sector OCASI has been very perceptive in recognizing the gaps that exists in overall management/ standards of practice. The workshops and the care involved in the selection of speakers are very evident and I would like to thank the Committee for all their efforts to truly make this conference progressive, informative and challenging.
- Thank you to Debbie Douglas's leadership and team for their commitment to always introduce change within the settlement sector! Everybody who I spoke to could only voice similar thoughts and fully appreciate how valued we all felt to be part of this management/settlement sector organization. Thank you to OCASI as a whole for representing our continued interest in social justice.
- Le colloque a été une réussite à mon avis.
- Excellent workshops for managers
- OCASI staff does a wonderful job of putting this Conference together. This conference is ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL for the settlement services sector and needs to be continued with the appropriate level of funding from CIC or MCI. I would like to see an actual presentation on the OSI project and how settlement workers and agencies can make use of this.
- Attraction et rétention des immigrants francophones en Ontario : Un avantage stratégique et économique: Super!
- Thank You OCASI staff for promptly attending to all my needs. Everyone was pleasant and attentive.
- Everything was very well organized, went smoothly and the atmosphere was friendly and engaging...Loved it
- Great Conference. Great panel and workshops, appreciate all the hard work by OCASI staff. Job well done!
- It was a perfect conference. Everything was excellent! All of speakers are professional! We learned a lot from this conference. Thanks!
- Speakers, facilities! Organization was beyond expectations, bravo Annie and the entire team. Thank you OCASI for your leadership role
- Good variety of topics, set-up worked well, hotel was comfortable, great turnout of people from across Ontario.
- I like the fact that this Conference was geared to managers, supervisors and co-ordinators. They often are overlooked as they traditionally don't fit into the ED Forum or the PD Conference for front-line settlement workers. I think this worked well.
- Best feature? l'ensemble, j'ai eu la chance de suivre des sessions qui ont su m'intéresser et m'apporter.